RURAL VIOLENCE IN COLO!



Banditry and other outbreaks? of violence in rural areas of Colombia, which have caused an estimated 250,000 deaths over the past 12 years, have recently increased following a two-year decline. This unrest springs largely from a complex of agrar-

langrievances, regional rivalries, and sharp party antagonisms, but Communists and pro-Castro elements are actively endeavoring to exploit it.

Disputes between factions and parties have paralyzed local

governments, impelling many Colombians to take justice into their own hands and destroying respect for law and order in the areas of violence.

About 21,000 of Colombia's 35,000-man

BACKGROUND

A half century of representative constitutional government in Colombia was interrupted in 1948 with widespread rioting sparked by the assacination of a popular leftist Liberal leader. Subsequent bitternoss between the Liberal and Conservative parties was reflected in rural violence and banditry which his Rojas military diotatorship of 1953-57 was unable to control. A constitutional system adopted in early 1958 gives the two parties partly in appointive and elective effices at all levels and alternals the presidency between them at four-year intervals until 1974. The system now is faltering, largely because of factional rival-ries within the parties.

PART II

NOTES AND COMMENTS

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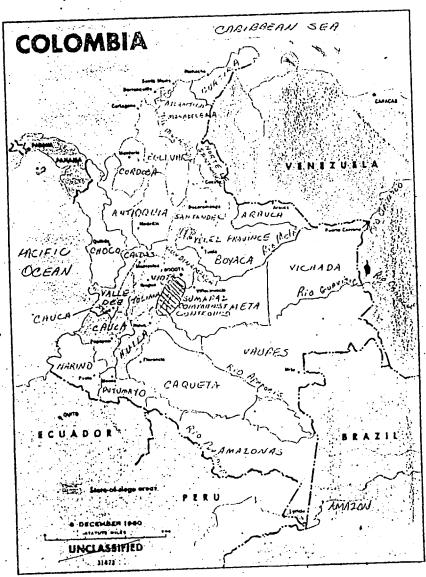


CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY SUMMARY

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army and 8,000 of its 26,000-man national police are assigned. to violence areas, but they have been unable to suppress the guerrillas. Improved police measures and limited rehabilitation programs for ex-guerrillas had improved the situation to some extent, but interparty and intraparty bickering have stymied congress sional action on muchneeded reform legislation to improve the basic causes of unrest.

The Colombian
Communist party, which
has an estimated membership of 7,500 and
has had legal status
since 1958, has had
some success in exploiting peasant unrest. Communist guerrillas have for some
years had absolute
control over the Sumapaz and Viota regions





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tax and agrarian reform legislation. A substantial worsening of rural violence now would undermine Lleras' prestige--particularly in view of his pledge to solve this complex problem--and aggravate tensions within the government.
(SECRET)